

# Brio Zento

## Brio Zento

Photo courtesy of Brio New Zealand

The Brio Zento is a 3-in-1 child safety seat made by Brio, Sweden. The design of the BRIO Zento is based on more than 20 years of research into child safety. BRIO Zento fulfills the latest safety requirements according to ECE R44 rev 04 - the European standard for children's car seats - as well as Swedish "T" approval. The Swedish "T" approval is one which only seats that show very low force on the head and neck in a collision get. Very few seats have this approval.

Whilst the Brio Zento is available in Scandinavia (Sweden, Norway etc) please remember that some of the information in this review (such as costs and retailers) may pertain to the country in which I reside, New Zealand. The Brio Zento is the first of its kind in this country and it's arrival has been long awaited.

Please browse the tabs below for more information, photos and specifications.

Manufacturers website: [www.briocarseats.co.nz](http://www.briocarseats.co.nz) or [www.brio.net](http://www.brio.net)

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{tab=Specs & Dimensions}

### Car Seat Specifications/Limits

- 0 - 25kg rear-facing
- 12 - 18kg forward-facing with harness
- 15 - 25kg forward-facing used as a belt positioning booster

### Car Seat Dimensions

Please remember these measurements are approximations and may not be totally accurate.

- Bottom slot: 19.8cm (7.8 inches)
- Top slot: 36cm(14.2 inches)
- Shell height (from seating position to top of seat): 57cm (22.4 inches)

Please also note that although the top slot height does appear to be quite low, the Brio Zento can be used until the tips of the ears/eye level is aligned with the top shell of the seat.

You may use the Brio Zento rear-facing until either the eyes/tips of the ears are aligned with the top of the seat shell OR the shoulders are 2.5cm or more (an inch) above the top slots.

{tab=Features}

- Tall seat back
- Deep side wings
- Washable
- 5-point harness
- Ergonomic design
- Adjustable foot
- EPS foam
- Blow moulded shell
- Innovative locking clip
- Instruction labelling/booklet/DVD/vehicle compatibility list incorporated in to head rest padding
- Rear-facing tethers
- Comes in colours Gray, Red and Black
- Rubber backed shoulder pads to help keep the harness in better position over the shoulders
- Rubberised "heels" to prevent slipping around the vehicle seat

{tab=Photos}

{gallery}Brio\_Zento{/gallery}

{tab=Review}

Date of manufacture of reviewed seat: October 2007

I'll start this review by heading straight in to the features of the Brio Zento and their benefits, pictures and generally more information about them. Please see the other tabs above for more information on specifications, photos, features and accessories for the Brio Zento.

EPS Foam: The Brio Zento has a great amount (and might I add, rather thick!!!) encasing of EPS Foam around the back and sides.

If you don't know much about EPS Foam and it's benefits, you may find the following threads informative:

<http://car-seat.org/showthread.php?t=25317>

<http://car-seat.org/showthread.php?t=30226>

Blow moulded shell:

The Brio Zento has a blow moulded shell (as opposed to a single cell shell) which provides a double wall of plastic and air for enhanced side impact protection.

Innovative locking clip:

One of the features of the Brio Zento that I found particularly interesting was the "locking clip". Although it appears to look relatively similar in shape and composition to your regular locking clip, it's actually bolted to the frame of the car seat by way of a strap to prevent it becoming a projectile in the event of a motor vehicle collision.

Instruction labelling/booklet/DVD/vehicle compatibility list incorporated in to head rest:

Another feature I thought was quite smart was putting a huge label on the underside of the head rest to demonstrate how to use the seat (if of course, you left the manual at home or temporarily misplaced it). In the head rest is an actual POCKET where an instruction/demonstration DVD, instruction booklet and vehicle compatibility list are stored.

The instruction manual is 8 pages (including the front and back page) even with very few pages I found it quite informative.

The DVD was quite interesting, you'd have expected that it would have voice over instructions. However, it did not. Even still I found the visuals quite good and as most people are very visual I think most people could understand the DVD quite easily.

And something you'd almost never see on any seat (though I did get one with my Britax Two Way Elite) is a vehicle compatibility list. Which is as it sounds, a list with a whole lot of vehicles the Brio Zento is compatible with, what a marvellous idea!

"Rubber" type backed harness shoulder pads, car seat "heels" and rubberised arm rests:

Pretty self explanatory really. I couldn't say for 100% certainty why the harness shoulder pads are rubber backed but some on here have theorised that this helps keep the harness firmly on the shoulders (much like a chest clip). As I said though, I'm not completely sure why they are "rubber" backed but I will endeavour to get this information for a future update of this review.

**\*\*UPDATE\*\*** After contacting Brio New Zealand I received this info about the rubber backed shoulder pads:

Quote: ...the rubber backed shoulder pads are supposed to help in keeping the harness in better position since rubber has got quite a good grip.

As above, the Brio Zento also has rubberised "heels" and arm rests. I'm not sure if there is a reason behind the "arm rests" being rubberised, however one would assume that the "heels" are rubberised to provide further stability? Hopefully I can get more information on this for a future update.

**\*\*UPDATE\*\*** After contacting Brio New Zealand I received this info about the rubberised heels and arm rests:

Quote: ...the rubber blocks on the heel are to prevent the Zento slipping on the vehicle's seat. The armrests however not really sure if there is a good reason for that - maybe more comfy than just straight plastic that can get a bit sweaty and uncomfortable

Other features:

For sure there are many other magnificent features, as you can see. The cover is nice and durable, suede, very pleasing to the eye. As of 22.02.2008 available in New Zealand are colours "Gray", "Red", and "Black". If you see anything in the pictures I've yet to explain, please PM me so I can update this review with anything I might have missed!

Red:

Gray:

Photo courtesy of Brio New Zealand

Black:

Please note: Colours of seats in the above pictures may not be "true to life".

Overall impression:

To be honest I am astounded by the attention to detail and quality of this seat, it is by far the best car seat I have had the pleasure of "playing" with let alone owning! Whilst some of the installation can appear to be daunting at first, I believe this is because it's not exactly conventional to what we have available right now so of course anything you're not used to is going to seem completely foreign (which technically it is really!).

The only cons I could think of that it is slightly heavy, especially because of it's thick blow moulded shell. The "upper tether" "hook" looking attachment can be a bit annoying to reconnect to the metal ring at the back of the seat however unless you're constantly switching this seat from RF to FF or repeatedly washing the cover, you're probably not going to care.

I've also yet to try to use it as a belt positioning booster and although it's marvellous to have a seat that can be used for multiple purposes, I feel that I would probably rather use a dedicated booster seat. The reasons for this are a) It's not going to be the only seat you ever need (nor is it even advertised to be) because it's simply just not tall enough to be used as a booster until transition from booster to adult only belt. You're definitely going to need to buy a belt positioning booster after you finish with this seat, but don't let this put you off. b) There's no shoulder belt adjuster? There's nothing to bring the shoulder belt on to the right position on a child, no strap, no guides in the side of the seat, nothing which is another reason I'd personally prefer a dedicated BPB.

**\*\*UPDATE\*\*** After contacting Brio New Zealand I received the following info about the Brio Zento used as a booster and my above "concerns" about a lack of a "belt positioning strap":

Quote: under the latest ECE standards you are not allowed any loose bits, hence locking clip bolted on and head pillow permanently attached. If the seatbelt does not end up sitting correctly on a child when used as a booster the child is too small to use it as a booster and should remain in the rearfacing position. To get a better idea as a distributor, I have tried both a 4-year old (weighing 19 kg) and a 5.5 year-old weighing 22kg, and on both of them the seatbelt sat in the perfect place - close to the neck - (not across it) - and close to the body - but not too far out on the shoulder.

Not exactly a con, but rather something I would change is giving it a higher shell. I believe the majority of children would most probably get till at least four years of age in this seat, quite probably at least even five. In my personal opinion this by far supersedes any RF child safety seat available in New Zealand, currently. In the sense that it offers much more longevity for RF children.

So all in all I'm left feeling incredibly impressed and then some. I already own a "Swedish" RF seat (Britax Two Way Elite) which I am still very happy with and when I got that seat it blew me away and when I got my Brio Zento I was even MORE amazed. I wish everyone could have one of these seats!

{tab=Installation}

Installing the rear-facing tethers:

The rear-facing tethers on "Swedish" seats (including the Brio Zento) is often something I find difficult to explain, but I'll try my best. These tethers typically tether towards the front of the vehicle however they can also tether towards the back if you have a free standing seat (i.e. captains chair) or you're installing this seat in the front passenger seat (see picture below as demonstrated by manual pictures). [Please note however you must never install a seat in the front passenger seating position where an active air bag is present].

Firstly, you have what's called lower tethers:

The "lower tether straps" are used to create an anchor point. To do this you must "loop" the straps around a vehicle seat leg, or vehicle seat track. See picture below. When you are creating an "anchor point" with the lower tethers, your aim is to create an anchor that is as short as possible. [Please note however due to the configuration of my vehicle seat legs the lower tethers in these pictures are both on different settings].

Then, you have what's called the "upper tether straps" (pictured below) that are used to hook/connect on to this anchor point.

These "upper tethers" are basically a length of webbing with one "latch" looking connection on one end (pictured below and to the left, says "safeguard" on it), and a "hooked" connection (much like you'd have for an upper tether strap on a FF seat [pictured bottom right]).

When you tether the Brio Zento rear-facing, you have two options:

You either a) Loop the "latch" looking connection that says safeguard on it) through the "ring" on the lower tethers then back towards the back of the child seat where it connects to a steel rod (pictured below).

or

b) Simply connect the "latch" looking connection (with safeguard on it) straight on to the metal ring and tighten it up.

However you might find this does not provide as firm an installation as option "a". [This method is not pictured in this review as it's pretty self explanatory].

The end result will look similar to the below picture:

Tethering around the seat bight (as opposed to the seat legs)

In some cases it is near impossible to create lower tethers around the vehicle seat legs. Reasons for this may be that they're simply just not accessible, you move your vehicle seat frequently or the vehicle seat legs are far too sharp and may cut in to the tethers. When one or more of the above problems arise there is a solution for this - tethering around the seat bight.

Brief explanation of the seat bight:

Where you can see a green line, and where my hand is, is called the "seat bight". Basically a "seat bight" is the crease/gap where the seat back and seat bottom meet.

How to install a lower tether around the seat bight:

As you can see in the picture below, first you must fit the "metal ring" end of the lower tether through the seat bight:

Then, you feed it right through to the other side, as seen below:

After you've done this, loop the other half of the lower tether around the other side (as seen below) and thread the metal ring end of the tether through the most appropriate hole in the lower tether.

Once you've done this, pull it nice and tight to make sure the lower tether is fastened tightly to the hinge of the seat.

Repeat the same process with the other lower tether strap, around the other hinge on the seat.

Rear-facing installation:

Just a note before I start. You can (and it's also common practice in Sweden) install a Brio Zento in the front passenger seat. However, you must never install this seat rear-facing in the front passenger seat where an active air bag is present. Often you can actually tether to the vehicle seat it's sitting on. I, as a Technician believe that the back seat is the best seat for most children in the event of a motor vehicle collision. However, I am also obligated to tell you that you may also install this seat in the front, as instructed in the user manual of the Brio Zento.

There are two ways you can install this seat rear-facing either:

a) with the foot folded up - or

b) with the foot folded out/down

At the bottom of the Brio (where the child's feet would usually rest) there are two holes on either side, this is the belt

path for rear-facing:

This isn't too different a belt path for most rear-facing seats out there so it's relatively simple and most people should find this pretty easy.

As below, you feed the seatbelt through one hole, then through the other hole, then you buckle the seat in. Depending on your seatbelt system (whether you're using a lap belt and your latch plate locks, whether your retractor locks or whether your seatbelt locks in emergency only) will depend on whether or not you need to use the provided locking clip for your Brio Zento. I'll explain this more in depth in a future thread. Please note that you would normally put the seatbelt UNDER the cover NOT ABOVE the cover however for the purpose of demonstration only I have shown the seatbelt over the cover so you can see where the seatbelt goes:

If you need to use the provided locking clip, then it will probably look similar to the picture below:

Of course some vehicles with ELR (emergency locking only retractors) and long seatbelt stalks may make it difficult or near impossible for you to install a locking clip. A remedy for this may be twisting the buckle stalk. You may rotate the seatbelt stalk no more than 3, 360° rotations. Doing so will shorten the buckle stalk, leaving you more room to install a locking clip by the latch plate. Please see the demonstration in the picture below. This is \*not\* in the Brio Zento user manual, this is a possible solution offered from myself as a Safe2Go and Child Passenger Safety Technician.

RF installation with foot up:

Installing the Brio Zento with the foot folded up allows the person seated in the seat in front of it to have more leg room. Folding the foot up also allows you to get a better recline angle for infants.

RF installation with foot extended:

When installing the Brio Zento in the rear-facing position with the foot extended so you can give your child more leg room (as well as make the seat more upright) you can have the rubberised heels along the "edge of the front of the vehicle seat" i.e. the heel \*just\* over the edge. If you have the heels too far back so much so that they're literally "hanging" off the edge then the seat would not sit firmly nor would it provide an adequate and possibly safe installation.

The belt path is the same as in the above posts, the only difference is that you pull out the foot and wait for it to "click" before you try to install the seat.

I know it seems complicated and hard to get your head around at first, but seeing it in person makes so much sense. However if you have any questions about the rear-facing tethering you've seen on this page, please do not hesitate to contact me via the "contact us" feature on this website.

Forward-facing installation:

The Brio Zento does not require top tether anchorage so finding a vehicle with top tether anchors or retrofitting anchors is not necessary. The way the seatbelt is routed through the Brio Zento for forward-facing ("long belt path") provides quite a solid/stable installation despite the lack of tether. I personally have no qualms in using this seat in the forward-facing position with it having no tether, based on the way the seatbelt routes right down the front of it.

The following pictures are pretty self explanatory. Feed the seatbelt through the hole at the FRONT of the seat, through

the back BEHIND the harness straps, and through the hole on the other side, feeding it through the front again.

Please make sure that you feed the seatbelt BEHIND and NOT over the arm rests of the Zento. Also make sure that you properly get rid of all slack in the seatbelt, the rubberised arm rests can give the false impression that you've tightened up all the slack until you move the car seat to check it's installation.

So it can take a bit of fiddling to get a nice firm installation but through practice, you do get there.

Using the Zento as a Belt Positioning Booster:

Last but not least, the Brio Zento is relatively easy to use as a booster seat. When using the Zento in booster mode you must remove the "top tethers" as well as the harness system. As expressed in the first post I personally don't feel it makes the best booster seat. However, it has been tested for this purpose so is therefore safe to use this way and of course it is very convenient should the need arise that you need a booster seat.

Photo courtesy of Brio New Zealand

{tab=Accessories}

Extra set of lower tethers and "upper" tethers are available at extra cost

{gallery}Brio\_Zento\_Accessories{/gallery}

{tab=Where to buy}

As of 22.02.2008 the Brio Zento is sold exclusively through Baby On The Move retailers around the country for approx. \$549NZD.

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